

M E R C A T O R:

O R,

Commerce Retrieved,

B E I N G

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British* Trade, &c.

From Tuesday, May 26. to Thursday, May 28. 1713.

*Misrepresenting the French Trade, a Practice begun in the Reign of King Charles II.
A scandalous and false Paper, intitl'd, A Scheme of the Trade between England and France,
Printed in the Reign of King Charles II.
The same Reprinted now, and given at the Door of the House of Commons.
The Frauds, false Assertions, and the unfair Calculations of that Paper exposed.
Another Account from the Custom-house produced; prov'd also erroneous.
A Scheme for the next Mercator.*

THE Nature of the thing requir'd, that the first of these Papers should be taken up with Generals. The Particulars are so copious and extensive, and especially their Number so pressing, that no Time or Room can be spar'd for Preambles and Introductions.

It is laid down in the former Paper, as the Basis of the present Question, That the French Trade, or the Trade between Britain and France, not only now is, but always has been carried on to the Advantage of this Nation. It surprizes the Readers at first View, as it was expected: The Town is big with Expectation, that so strange a thing, and so clashing with vulgar Opinion, shall be made out. In order to give them full Satisfaction, it will be very proper first to expose the Arts and Contrivances, and how managed, by which this Error came to prevail first upon the Minds of Men; how the People came to be impos'd upon, and to receive it as an uncontroverted Truth, that we lost by that Trade, which on the contrary has so good Testimony on its side to prove its being constantly gainful to us.

This is so material to the Evidence of the Affirmative, that altho' this Paper shall studiously shun Invectives, and treat Mens Follies with as much Tendernefs as may be; yet such Delusions may not escape just Censure, that they may spread no farther, and that the Deluded may be rescued from the Mischiefs that attend it.

In the Year 1674. King Charles II. having appointed Commissioners for a Treaty of Commerce with France, the said Commissioners desired several Merchants of London to give them their Opinion of the State of our Trade of that Kingdom.

It might be material in this Case, to hint, how the Publick Affairs stood at that time, and what Methods were then taken by a Party of Men to make Breaches between the King and his Subjects; to which wicked Purpose the Account of Trade now mentioned was particularly made Serviceable; But it is enough to name those things: It were to be wish'd the same evil Designs were not too much revived at this time; perhaps then the same Corrupt Methods would not so well suit the Purposes of those who carry them on.

The Merchants in order to comply with the Commissioners Order, or, as might be truly said, with the Party-Design abovemention'd, gave in a Paper, which they call'd *A Scheme of the Trade, as it was then carry'd on between England and France*: by which they pretended, that the French gained by us Yearly above Nine hundred and sixty thousand Pounds Sterling.

It is not so much wonder'd at, that such an Insolence could be offer'd, and things so palpably false and fraudulent could be THEN put upon the Government, for Reasons drawn from the Circumstances of the King's Affairs at that time; But it is very surprizing to see, that Paper Re-printed at this time, given about at the Doors of our Parliament Houses and elsewhere, and made use of as the Fundamental, the Test or Touchstone of the French Trade, and as an unquestion'd Authority to Argue from in this Matter.

The present Government, rather inclining to pity, than resent the Injurious Treatment they meet with in these Cases, tho' they cannot be insensible of what such Behaviour deserves, yet are pleas'd to remit these People to the Reproaches, which all Men will believe due to them, when the Truth of these things comes to be known.

The Frauds in the said Scheme of Trade now Printed and handed about as above, and which are needful to be observ'd here, besides such as will farther appear hereafter, are these.

1. They draw an Account of a Years Export to France, and a Years Import from France; but to give the Advantage to their Design, they take the Year 1668. for the Export, being the Year immediately after the Tariff of 1667. which doubled the Duties on our Goods in France, and consequently was the lowest Year they could find; and for the Import they take the Year 1674. which was the highest Year they could pitch upon, and these they set one against the other: The unfairness of which, and the difference, which that partial Method makes in the Account, the Particulars which are preparing will Expose.

2. To heighten the Account of our Import from France, they enumerate all the kinds of Goods, which we bring from thence; And on the other hand, to lessen the Sum Exported, they wholly omit all the Growth and Produce of our Plantations, our East-India, Turkey and other Trades, which are Yearly Exported by Certificate, and amount to a very great Sum.

3. In the Account of our Imports from France, they grossly Enhance the Quantities; Particularly they say we Imported One hundred and fifty thousand Pound of wrought Silks, and Sixty thousand Pieces of Lockram and Dowlas in the Year 1674. whereas by the Custom-House Accounts, nothing near any such Quantity, either of Linnens, or Silks, was ever brought into England in One Year, as shall particularly appear.

4. The Quantities of English Manufactures Exported, of which they give an Account, does no way agree with the Custom-House Books, and the Value of fine Goods and coarse are Confounded.

5. But the Account of Wine and Brandy Printed in this Paper, and affirmed to be Imported from Michaelmas 1668. to Michaelmas 1669. is worth any Man's while to Remark upon. They say, there was Imported in that time Eleven thousand Ton of Wine, and Four thousand Ton of Brandy, whereas by the Books of the Custom-House, there appears to be Imported in the Port of London no more than Five thousand seven hundred and twenty six Tons of Wines, and Three hundred thirty three Tons of Brandy.

It may give the Reader some Labour to enter into the Particulars of an Account so erroneous as this appears to be; to save which Trouble, it is design'd, that an exact Calculation of the Difference, which these wilful Prevarications produce in the real Value of the Exports and Imports shall be made publick, by which it will be most clearly proved, that even in those very Years, viz. 1668. and 1674. wherein by this Account the French Trade over-run the English Trade Nine hundred and sixty thousand Pounds per Ann. On the contrary, by a just and true Account, the English Trade had the Gain, and the Value of our Exports exceeded the Value of our Imports in a considerable Sum.

This will farther be cleared up to us, by taking to pieces another Account given really from the Custom-House, of the Value of the Exports and Imports in the Port of London to and from France, for two Years, viz. from Michaelmas 1662. to Michaelmas 1663. and from Michaelmas 1668 to Michaelmas 1669. These two Accounts stand thus.

Imported from France from Michaelmas 1662. to Michaelmas 1663.	l.	s.	d.
643.706	16	00	
Exported	375.065	06	00
Ballance against England	268.641	10	00
Imported from France from Michaelmas 1668. to Michaelmas 1669.	l.	s.	d.
541.543	16	00	
Exported	108.699	04	00
Ballance against England	432.844	12	00

These Accounts, it must be acknowledged, are much modester than those above; for instead of Sixty thousand Pieces of Lockram and Dowlas, which the other Paper says were Imported Anno 1668. this Account charges Twenty five thousand and fourteen Pieces, and for One hundred and fifty thousand Pounds weight of wrought Silks, this Account owns but Six thousand four hundred and eight Pounds; but yet this Account lies open to two manifest Errors, which being allow'd for, will immediately Transfer the Ballance from the Debt to the Credit of the English Trade.

1. That among the Exports to France are entirely omitted, as before, all our Re-exportations or Goods of Foreign Growth Exported by Certificate, (viz.) Sugar, Tobacco, Indico, Dying-Wood, Cotton, Ginger, &c. from our own Colonies, and which are to be esteem'd as our own Growth, as also our East-India Goods and Turkey Goods, besides the Trade of other Countries Exported, which put together will amount to a very large Sum, the Particulars whereof, as above, will be made Publick.

2. That in this Account of Imports from France, the Wine and Brandy is Charged at the Price sold here after the Freight Customs and Charges were paid, (viz.) the Wine at Thirty six Pound per Ton, and the Brandy at Forty five Pound per Ton, which being reduced to Eight Pound or Nine Pound per Ton, which was the most which one with another was the Cost in France at that time, will take off in that one Article alone from the Ballance One hundred seventy seven thousand three hundred and sixteen Pounds; and the like in many other Particulars.

No wonder the Trade to France under these misrepresentations, has been esteem'd a general Mischief to the Nation; If it were needful many more such mistakes and unfair Calculations might be exposed, but as these sufficiently take off from the Pretence on one hand, so in a few Days a true Scheme of the Trade shall be Exhibited in these Sheets, so to put it past any more Dispute, that what has been affirm'd is true, (viz.) That the French Trade has always been to our Advantage.

To bring this down to the Question in hand, the next Paper shall let us see, what Care has been taken in the present Treaty to remove all the Obstructions, that lay in the way of our Trade. How all, that the English Merchants desir'd or represented as needful for them, has been granted: How the Duties on our Goods in France are reduced to the same Rates, as they were at, when we had the largest and most beneficial Trade with them; and how the few Exceptions that are made (tho' nothing were to be abated, as it is yet hoped there may) will not prevent our still carrying on a very Gainful Trade into France: And lastly, How great Duties the French are still to pay in England for those Goods, we shall take from them, and how the said Duties effectually preserve our several Manufactures of Silk in England from being in any Danger by the Treaty.

In doing this, the Explanations of the Table publish'd in the former Paper will come of Course, with a particular Account of how, and by what Steps, the several Duties upon our Goods in France have been raised, and what the state of our Trade has been from the Year 1664. to the present time.

